

## Grovetown Lagoon ..... Te Whanau Hou

### Walkway could end at birdwatching hide

A short walkway could soon wend its way to a birdwatching hide beside the Grovetown Lagoon. Lagoon restoration project supporters got together in late July, to check out a likely route for the walkway which could follow the southern side of the Lagoon to where the water opens up providing a view towards Mount Fishtail. Starting on the Department of Conservation (DoC)-administered reserve behind the Wairau Rowing Club buildings, the approximately 150 metre path would cross a swampy area with a boardwalk then end at a camouflaged hide where birds could be watched undisturbed. The walkway proposal is based on a concept drawn up for the Grovetown Lagoon Working Group last year. Architect Tim Barton, a familiar face at working bees, is putting together a proposed design for the walkway and will estimate costs. The plan from here is identify willows and other trees which will need to be removed and decide how this should be done. The Marlborough District Council has dedicated \$20,000 to the project, from its Reserves and Amenities budget. Platforms could also be built over the edge of the Lagoon, accessible from the road to Maori Island.



Steve Dower indicates where a birdwatching hide could be built, with a view up the Lagoon.

### Green Pavolva gathers down by riverside

Dave Barker and Steve Dower served up an overview of the Grovetown Lagoon Restoration Project – Te Whanau Hou – to the New Zealand Recreation Association Park Managers annual conference in July. The Grovetown Lagoon visit was included in the Green Pavolva conference's rural field trip which also called at Blind Creek Landcare Group riparian planting at Tuamarina, the Rarangi Landcare Group's beach restoration project, Willi and Rose Parsons' wetland near the Opawa River and Wairau Bar. Marlborough District Council reserves and amenities manager, Rosie Bartlett said delegates appreciated Dave and Steve's interesting overview of the project, illustrated with "before and after" aerial photos. The New Zealand Recreation Association represents people and organisations associated with all aspects of recreation; leisure, parks, open space management, aquatic, conservation and sports delivery.



## Grovetown School shadehouse in service



*Some of the artists who painted poles at the school's new shadehouse were Aidan Thomas (9), Shaun Woods (8) and 10-year-old Kaylah Boniface.*

Building of the Grovetown School shadehouse was finished over winter and spring, with expert help from Murray Ward who has two daughters at the school.

A stylish touch was added by schoolchildren selected to decorate the poles as a special privilege rewarding good behaviour.

By the end of August, shade-cloth was in place and children were potting up seedlings from root-trainers into planting bags with potting mix, for planting out at the Grovetown Lagoon next autumn.

*Murray Ward's offer of lending his building skills to the shadehouse project ensured a professional finish.*



*Raising the rafters; Steve Dowell helps Murray Ward lift a support beam into place.*



## Tui to Grovetown

The planting of nectar-bearing plants between the Grovetown Lagoon and township and along the Wairau River could attract large numbers of native birds including tui to feed and breed in the area.

The Marlborough District Council (MDC)'s Tui to Town project is aimed at encouraging people to grow plants such as flax, cabbage trees, kowhai and flowering gums which support nectar-feeding birds.

Tui require at least one hectare of habitat to breed. The oxbow loop of the Grovetown Lagoon is 1.9km long and up to 80 metres wide, with the surrounding restoration area likely to become an ideal habitat for forest bird species.

Creating patches of suitable habitat in Grovetown gardens and on surrounding properties would help attract tui and other birds to the township, says MDC land resources officer, Nicky Eade. Suitable species could be planted now while the ground is still damp and watered through summer if needed, or next autumn.

"Kowhai that have been planted at the Lagoon are getting bigger and beginning to flower so nectar-feeding birds like tui and bellbirds should soon begin to show up," says Dave Barker, who brings many years of experience in monitoring, observing and tracking birds to his wetland restoration role at the Grovetown Lagoon.

Bird numbers were increasing as native trees grew, providing shelter in winter when willows have dropped all their leaves. Silvereyes, blackbirds and song thrushes were spreading seed from the trees planted such as karamu and kohuhu. Trees also provide roosts for little shags and pied shags.

Dave would love to see the banks of the Wairau River extensively planted in flax and other native species, creating a major bird corridor from the Northbank into the lower Wairau.

The vision of the 'Tui to Town' project is to work as a community to increase the area of natural habitat on the Wairau Plain, suitable for tui and other native birds and animals by at least five hectares.

Today, less than 1% of natural cover remains on privately owned land on the Plain and the rich variety of native animals is mostly lost. Original vegetation has been replaced by a mix of urban/industrial/roads (10%), viticulture (35%), pastoral farming and general rural (50%), and waterways and estuarine areas (5%).

Anyone planting 1000 square metres or more of potential tui habitat may apply to the MDC for financial assistance.

To find out more about the Tui to Town project including a planting list, visit the website [www.marlborough.govt.nz/enviromonitoring/tui\\_town.cfm](http://www.marlborough.govt.nz/enviromonitoring/tui_town.cfm) You are also encouraged to log sightings of tui on the Wairau Plain and what they are feeding on. Around four tui sightings have already been recorded, in and around Grovetown.



Photo by Damien Tomas

## Boundary clarification slows flow project

Progress on improving water quality and flow through the Grovetown Lagoon has slowed, as negotiations over river and land boundaries in the area continue.

A doubling of capacity of the southern outlet is letting more water into the Lagoon, as intended. Now, what's needed to complete the two-stage project is the building of controllable gates at the northern end of the Lagoon so more water can be fed in from the Wairau River on every tide, explains Marlborough District Council rivers and drainage engineer, Brin Williman.

Plans to build the controllable gates last, then next summer have been put on hold while tenure of the land involved is clarified, says Brin.

Steps towards purchasing the Sutherland wetland as a



Marlborough District Council Reserve which could potentially be added to the Grovetown Lagoon Restoration area is taking longer than anticipated, for the same reason.



## Hard work rewarded; vistas open, canopies grow

Six years after the Grovetown Lagoon restoration project – Te Whanau Hou – began, the hard work that's been done since is being rewarded.

Willows and other weed-trees including plums, hawthorn and elderberry have been removed along with any re-growth, opening up areas for planting and creating vistas across the Lagoon. Seedlings have grown to form an attractive canopy and water flow is improving due to a doubling of the capacity of the Lagoon's southern outlet.

The preferred method for removing pest trees has been drilling then injecting with poison, rather than felling (which risks damaging native species beneath) or bringing in heavy machinery. Trees are poisoned when their sap's rising from spring through to autumn, and have usually died by the end of winter.

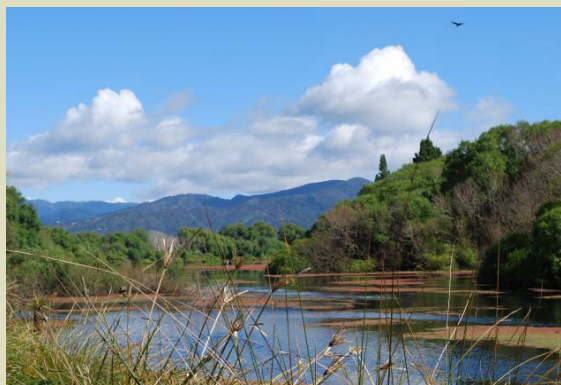
Dead trees can then be felled for firewood, or into wet areas where they add organic matter.

Opening up gaps in the willow canopy has encouraged natural regeneration of species including karamu, whiteywood and cabbage trees. Where once birds spread mainly weeds like elderberry, briar and

blackberry, they're now also helping return native species to the Lagoon by feeding on berries of planted trees then depositing the seed with their faeces.

After a lot of work, old man's beard is under control although constant follow-up will be needed to ensure this aggressive climber doesn't again get away.

Working bees this year have focused on taking away felled trees as firewood and burning any rubbish, removing a redundant fence in front of the toi toi planting along Steam Wharf Road.



"I've been involved in the project for three years now and am really impressed at what's been achieved," says Liam Stoneley of the Marlborough Boys' College environment group. "I admit, that initially I wondered where we were going. Now it's so satisfying to see native plants coming through so well in areas that have been cleared then planted and to be able to envisage how the Grovetown Lagoon will look in another five years."

## Firewood on offer to fundraising groups

Large quantities of firewood were taken from the Grovetown Lagoon last winter.

Some of the willows felled and windblown plums will keep the home fires burning for volunteers who have turned up at working bees with trailers. Firewood has also been made available for fundraising, with one beneficiary being the Marlborough Boys' College Leo Club, headed by regular working bee volunteer, Liam Stoneley.

Proceeds from selling two trailer-loads of wood taken from the Lagoon last winter and another couple this year will be spent on projects benefiting the local community, says Liam.

Fundraising groups are welcome to request access to firewood. However, only authorised gathering is allowed, for safety reasons and to prevent damage to young trees during removal.

## Grovetown Lagoon Meeting and Event Programme, May-July 2009

Support the Grovetown Lagoon Restoration Project - Te Whanau Hou - by becoming a member, attending working bees and follow-up barbeques, or turning up at meetings. Anyone interested should contact the Project facilitator, Lynda Neame, 578 2013 [ljneame@xtra.co.nz](mailto:ljneame@xtra.co.nz)

Meetings are held six weekly and working bees monthly, with the first of each being:

Wednesday, February 4	-	World Wetland Day
Tuesday, February 17	-	working group meeting, 2pm, MDC committee room
Sunday, March 29	-	working bee and barbeque, Grovetown Lagoon, 9.30am
Tuesday, April 7	-	working group meeting, 2pm, MDC committee room
Sunday, April 26	-	working bee and barbeque, Grovetown Lagoon, 9.30am
Tuesday, May 19	-	working group meeting, 2pm, MDC committee room
Sunday, May 31	-	working bee and barbeque, Grovetown Lagoon, 9.30am
Tuesday, June 26	-	working group meeting, 2pm, MDC committee room
Sunday, July 26	-	working bee and barbeque, Grovetown Lagoon, 9.30am